

### 1. Karma that is experienced in the current life

Tibetan: མཐོང་ཚེས་ལ་སྟོང་ལྟུང་གི་ལས། - *Thong-choe la nyong gyur gyi lae* (*thong-choe* = current life, *la* = preposition, *nyong gyur* = to be experienced)

This refers to the result of a karma being experienced in the same life in which the karma was accumulated. It is also a very strong (positive or negative) karma, for the stronger a karma is the earlier it ripens. However, this does not mean that one does not experience the result of that karma in a later life – it rather means that the karma is so powerful that one *starts* to experience its result in this lifetime. In the case of a heavy negative karma, such as the karma of killing one's parents, it may ripen in this lifetime in the form of various illnesses, mental problems and other difficulties.

In the case of a strong positive karma it may ripen in this lifetime in the form of great mental and physical well-being.

### 2. Karma that is experienced after taking rebirth

Tibetan: སྐྱེས་ནས་སྟོང་ལྟུང་གི་ལས། - *Kye nae nyong gyur gyi lae* (*kye nae* = having been [re]born)

In this case the karma will be experienced in the next life, i.e. the karmic result ripens in the life that immediately follows the life during which the karma was accumulated. This karma is not as strong as the *karma that is experienced in the current life*.

### 3. Karma that is experienced in subsequent existences

Tibetan: ལམ་གྲངས་གཞན་ལ་སྟོང་ལྟུང་གི་ལས། - *Lae-drang zhaen la nyong gyur gyi lae* (*laen-drang* = number of times, *zhaen* = other)

This karma refers to karma that will be experienced not in the next life but in any of the subsequent lives after the next life. It is weaker than the other two types of karma, because in general, the weaker a karma is the later it ripens.

The way in which the numerous virtuous and non-virtuous karmic imprints that exist in our mental continuum ripen is as follows:

- a) Whichever karma is weightiest will ripen first
- b) If the weights are equal, whatever karma is manifest at the time of death will ripen first
- c) If this is also the same, whatever karma one has predominantly become habituated to will ripen first.
- d) If this is also the same, whatever karma one has accumulated first will ripen earliest.

Vasubhandu says in his ***Self-Commentary on the Abhidharmakosha (Treasure of Knowledge)***:

*As to the actions that give rise to cyclic existence,  
There are those that are weighty, those that are near,  
Those to which one is habituated, and those one did earliest.  
Among these, the former will ripen first.*

This completes a brief presentation of karma based on Lama Tsongkhapa's ***Lam Rim Chenmo (Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment)*** during the exposition on the attitude of a person of smaller capacity.

The following presentation of karma is based on Lama Tsongkhapa's ***Lam Rim Chenmo (Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment)*** during the exposition on the attitude of a person of medium capacity:

There is another way of categorizing karma:

1. Karma that is intention
2. Intended karma

## 1. Karma that is intention

Tibetan: སེམས་པའི་ལས། - *Sem pa'i lae* (*Sem pa* = intention)

According to the Sautantrika, Chittamatra, and Madhyamika Svatantrika tenets, karma refers solely to the mental factor of intention. This means that whatever is a mental, verbal, or physical karma is necessarily intention. Intention is one of the five mental factors that accompany every main mind. The other four mental factors are: feeling, discrimination, contact, and attention.

Therefore, according to these tenets, *karma that is intention* refers to the mental intention that motivates any volitional physical or verbal actions.

Volitional physical or verbal actions are always preceded by a virtuous, non-virtuous, or neutral intention that motivates or initiates the action. Hence, in the case of killing, the mental factor associated with the mental consciousness that motivates and thus precedes the act of killing is a *karma that is intention*. However, the mental factor of intention associated with the mental consciousness (in the continuum of the killer) *during* the actual act of killing is not a karma that is intention but *intended karma*.

The mental factor of intention that precedes any volitional and physical action, i.e. *karma of intention*, directs and propels the mind to become involved in the object. It moves the mind toward engaging with beneficial, harmful and neutral objects.

Asanga says in his ***Abhidharma-samuccaya (Compendium of Knowledge)***:

*What is intention? It is the mental karma that involves the mind; it acts to engage the mind in virtuous, non-virtuous, and neutral actions.*

However, according to the Vaibashika and Madhyamika Prasangika tenets, karma does not refer solely to the mental factor of intention. In fact, whatever is a mental factor of intention is necessarily *mental* karma. Verbal karma refers to intended verbal actions of speech, while physical karma refers to intended physical actions of the body. Therefore, according to these two tenets, *karma of intention* is necessarily mental karma and thus refers to both, the mental factor of intention that *precedes* the physical act of killing and the intention that manifests *during* the act of killing.

## 2. Intended Karma

Tibetan: བསམས་པའི་ལས། - *Sam pa'i lae* (*Sam-pa* = intended)

As explained above, according to the Sautantrika, Chittamatra, and Madhyamika Svatantrika tenets, *intended karma* does not refer to the actual intended physical or verbal actions but to the mental actions, i.e. the mental factors associated with the mental consciousnesses that *accompany* the intended physical or verbal actions.

Taking the example of killing, the intention to kill (*karma of intention*) induces a second intention that moves the body *during* the act of killing. That intention which is present at the time of the physical action constitutes the *intended karma*.

In the same way, a volitional verbal action is preceded by the intention (*karma of intention*) to say something. The karma of intention then induces the *intended karma* that is the intention that is present at the time of the verbal action and that moves the voice.

Therefore, the actual intended physical action of killing and the intended verbal action of saying something are not considered to be karma.

According to the Vaibashika and Madhyamika Prasangika tenets, *intended karma* refers to *any physical or verbal action* that is motivated by the preceding karma of intention. In the case of killing, the preceding karma of intention, i.e. the intention at the time of planning or merely wishing to kill, induces another mental factor of intention that directs the body *during* the act of killing. Both intentions – prior and during the act of killing – are karma of intention. The actual physical act of killing, on the other hand, is physical karma and thus *intended karma*.

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